

EDITORIALS.

THE WORK that has been done and undertaken at Buitenzorg, and the various problems in which American botanists are interested and which need tropical conditions for their proper investigation, constrain us to believe that the time has come for the establishment of a laboratory in the American tropics.

An American Tropical Laboratory The science of botany in general, so far as morphology, physiology, and ecology are concerned, rests largely upon the results of researches carried on in the north temperate zone, in gardens and laboratories situated between the parallels of 40° and 55° . While taxonomy has had world-wide material for its superficial diagnoses, and has reached a fair measure of knowledge concerning the general relationships of plants, knowledge of these other great divisions of the science has been derived from a study of the plants indigenous to a strip of territory fifteen degrees in width and extending across one continent and partly across another, and of those introduced from other regions and growing under abnormal conditions of climate or substratum in the open air and in conservatories. That many of the conclusions reached under such circumstances are not capable of general application is becoming more and more apparent.

IN ORDER to come in contact with the problems that are now pressing, the botanist must establish his laboratory in the midst of the normal conditions, and no condition is so vitally needed by botanical research, and so overwhelmingly lacking, as that furnished by the tropics. In consequence of this, the garden and laboratories at Buitenzorg already have furnished opportunities for many important discoveries, and have become a sort of Mecca to the botanists of the world. But to an American botanist Java is a hemisphere away, and a visit to Buitenzorg is equal to a trip around the globe. A month is necessary for the journey each way, and the cost of it, including but a brief stay at the laboratory, is about twelve hundred dollars.

THE AMERICAN BOTANIST needs to make no such journey. At the distance of a week's travel from almost every important laboratory there lies a tropical region whose teeming flora is but little known, even to taxonomists. At our very door there lies a vast *terra incognita*, with excessively luxuriant vegetation, and inviting endless research. The duty seems to be laid upon American botanists to establish and maintain an international laboratory in the American tropics, one which American botanists can visit at small expense during a summer vacation, or upon a short leave of absence, and in which the observer in the oriental tropics would find still other revelations. It is impossible to overestimate the value of such an institution, not only to American botany, but to the science in general.

THE ESTABLISHMENT of such a laboratory might be accomplished most easily by the cooperation of several universities, for its intercollegiate character should be maintained. Perhaps the original cost should be borne by private subscription, and the running expenses met by the different universities pledging themselves for so many tables. At least the subject deserves to be taken in hand by a committee of botanists and investigated in all of its bearings. A study of the map will show that the conditions to be met favor either the eastern coast of Mexico or the islands near the Caribbean Sea. It is estimated that a trial station might be maintained on one of these islands for one year at a cost of \$5000; and after the selection of a permanent station the laboratory buildings might be constructed and extended according to the demand. The use of grounds necessary could be obtained from the government, and the area should embrace all possible levels so far as possible, a feature at Buitenzorg which is nearly ideal.

IT IS TO BE HOPED that a reconnoissance party of American botanists will soon visit the region proposed and report as to possible sites. Such a visit should be made before the botanical meetings of next summer, to which the report would be most appropriately made.